I:Srinivas E-5 (1940-42)1952 AW5 Coorg AW5

623 they are today. They controlled the public conduct of a Coorg very
681 thoroughly. The principal sanctions at the disposal of the assembly were *poḷévāḍu* or fine, and *poramaḍi* or excommunication. There was a regular scale of fines laying down the maximum that could be levied on an individual, and on an entire *okka*, village, or *nāḍ*. The maximum fine on a village headman guilty of an offence was very much higher than the maximum for an ordinary individual, and similarly, the maximum for a *nāḍ*-headman was higher than that for a village-headman.

[689] Fines are levied for minor offences such as failure to attend a communal dance or hunt, or to observe the requisite food restrictions during the festival of a village-deity. Failure to pay the fine resulted in the guilty person being excommunicated from the village. He was not permitted to attend the village-assembly or a communal dance or hunt. He was not allowed to enter the village temple or take part in the festival of the village-deity,[1] but he was allowed to remain in any house in which he had a right to stay, such as his natal house, or his wife's natal house. The guilty person could resume his normal social status after he had paid the fine, half of which went to the village temple and the other half to the elders who levied the fine.

•688 Serious offences were punished by the offender's being ex-
[558] communicated from caste. Such a punishment was usually for a prescribed period, during which the offender was not entitled to stay or dine even in his natal house. Not only was he prohibited from attending a dance or hunt, but he was also prohibited from going into any house in the village. The barber was not allowed to shave him, the washerman was not allowed to wash his clothes, and similarly artisan castes could not make anything for him. Even his cattle were not allowed to graze on the common pasture.

783 After the prescribed period of punishment was over, the offender
778 had to go on a pilgrimage to Bhāgamanḍla where the river Kanaké joins the Kāvēri. He had to have his head and faced shaved, and bathe in the sin-cleansing waters of the sacred Kāvēri. He then went to the temple of Bhaganḍēshwara for worship, and this was followed by a visit to the source of the River Kāvēri, which is probably the most sacred spot in Coorg. He bathed in the bigger of
783 the two springs and worshipped the smaller spring. He then

[1] A person polluted by the occurrence of a birth or death suffers from similar disabilities.

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Formerly every Coorg akka had one or more Paleya or other low-caste families attached to it as slaves. This was again an hereditary relationship, and between families and not between individuals.

II

In Coorg the agnatically related males form a corporate body enjoying the bulk of the rights in the *okka*. Men, thanks to patri-locality, are assured of continuous residence in the *okka* to which they belong, whereas the women have to leave their natal *okka* on marriage and become members of their conjugal *okka*. The men have a sense of belonging to the *okka* which is absent in all but the oldest women. A girl has to leave her natal *okka* on marriage, and this break in residential continuity is an important factor having legal and other consequences. It takes a long time[1] for her to be accepted into her conjugal *okka*: only when her children are grown up does she have the assured sense of belonging to her conjugal *okka*.

Sons are the comfort and hope of parents. They are the pillars of the *okka*. They are the means by which the *okka* continues to exist, and the continuity of the *okka* is a matter of the most profound concern to the members. Daughters are destined to leave their natal *okkas* and the children that are born to them enrich and perpetuate a different *okka*.

A woman is not a member of an *okka* in the sense a man is, and the legal rights she enjoys are always inferior to a man's. There are compensations, however. A man enjoys his legal rights in one *okka*, whereas a woman enjoys hers in two, her natal and conjugal *okkas*. A girl is maintained in her natal *okka* till her marriage, or throughout her life if she decides to be a spinster. She has the right to return to her natal *okka* if, for example, her husband is impotent, or suffers from an incurable illness, or if her mother-in-law does not treat her properly. She has a right to return to her natal *okka* if she is divorced, assuming of course that she had not been divorced for a serious offence such as adultery with an Untouchable. Should she be guilty of such an offence she is thrown out of caste irrevocably and this means that she loses her rights in both her natal and her conjugal *okkas*.

At marriage her relatives give her gifts of jewellery, clothes, and vessels. These remain her property, and in the event of her divorce she brings them back to her natal *okka*.

[1] Cross-cousin marriage makes it easier for the girl to be absorbed into her conjugal *okka*.

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The goods which the bride, now widowed, brought into her conjugal house are then removed to the veranda. The widow's family friend selects two or three pieces of cloth from the widow's possessions and puts them into a box. He carries the box into the central hall and says, 'Since our girl ate here we should like to leave this box here'. The elders of the late husband's *okka* are theoretically free to accept or reject this gift. But in practice a definite sentiment seems to exist against its acceptance.[1]

VII

Coorg marriages are very stable, and divorce is not at all common. In fact, an exceptionally able and well-informed elder could not recall more than seven cases of divorce in the last fifty years. The most frequent ground for divorce seems to be adultery on the wife's part. Incompatibility between the husband and wife, impotence of the husband, cruelty, and lack of thrift on the wife's part are also grounds for divorce, though these seem to have been very rare. A wife was expected to obey the husband in most matters, and she worked under the supervision of the mistress of the house in matters of domestic economy, and consequently incompatibility and lack of thrift became significant only in rare cases.

Where a Coorg woman committed adultery with a member of an Untouchable caste she was summarily thrown out of caste. Adultery with a Coorg man was not as serious a matter, but still far from trivial. In the latter case, her husband was certain to turn her out of his house and her natal *okka* would be not at all friendly to her. If, however, her parents were alive, they would offer her shelter even though they strongly disapproved of what she had done.

The attitude of the public towards a divorcée is different from that towards a widow. Widowhood is a misfortune, decreed by God or the result of *karma*, whereas divorce reveals a serious flaw in the divorcée's character. This is natural enough if the woman has been divorced for adultery, or lack of thrift, or incompatibility. It is a woman's duty to adjust herself to her husband and his *okka*,

[1] Shri K. J. Chengappa tells me that where the widow has children by her first marriage and it is decided to allow these children to remain in their late father's *okka*, all the widow's goods are not removed to her natal *okka*. A good part is left in the late husband's *okka* because of the children. She takes to her second husband's house only a small part of her original trousseau.

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tions at the harvest festival is necessary here. The headman of the most important temple in the village begans by asking whether everyone (every adult male, that is to say) is present.

The village-headman replies,[1] 'Yes, according to old usage.'

Village-headman: 'Has the *okka* which has committed the wrong, the one who stays outside (Poleyas), the one who heats and beats (Airis or smiths), the one who lifts and beats (Maḍivāḷas or washermen), without a single absentee, is everyone assembled here?'

Temple-headman: 'Yes, according to old usage.'

Temple-headman: 'He who knew how to sing, but refused to sing or dance at the festival, or when the villagers went singing and dancing to his house, he did not open the closed door, or he did not remove the bell-metal dining-dish leaned against the wall, or he did not light the sacred wall-lamp, or he did not mix with another, or he abused another villager during the festival, or he beat another villager all over the body, such a man shall pay a fine of forty-eight *paṇas* for violating the injunctions of god.' Saying this the temple-headman extends his palm towards the village-headman who strikes it as witness to the statement.

The above rite makes it clear that the members of every caste in the village, including the Poleyas, attended the meeting of the village-assembly, and that everyone in the village had to observe certain rules and restrictions during the festival. The villagers had to keep their houses clean, with the doors open to receive a party of singers and dancers, with the sacred wall-lamp lit, they had to join in the singing and dancing, and finally they had to refrain from quarrelling, whatever the provocation. Failure to observe these rules was punished with a heavy fine.

At the festival of a village-deity *tappaḍaka* ritual is performed in the beginning and the restrictions enumerated to the members of the village (or *nāḍ*), whereas in the harvest festival *tappaḍaka* is an occasion for meting out punishment to those guilty of

[1] I have given above a translation of the formulas as they occur in *Paṭṭōlé Paḷumé*, pp. 239–40.

In Kaḍiyetnāḍ the temple-headman, or a temple official, opens the proceedings, whereas near Mercara the village-headman does it. The person who has to reply again varies from region to region: it may be the village- or temple-headman, or some elder.

The date of the ritual of the enumeration of restrictions also varies from region to region.

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796 688 misdemeanour during the festival. Again, the latter may be regarded as more secular than the former: at the festivals of the village-deities the members of the village take a vow in the name of god to keep the rules and restrictions, whereas at the harvest festival no such vow is taken.

796 [535] At the end of the harvest festival there is a village dance (*ūr kōlu*) in which all the adult males in the village have to take part; and on the following day, or two days later, there is a dance for the entire *nāḍ* to which every village belonging to the particular *nāḍ* sends its representatives. Each village makes a special point of sending its best dancers to the *nāḍ* dance.

[224] The village dance is followed by a collective hunt by the villagers. (A collective hunt may also be organized by a *nāḍ*.) Every adult male in the village is required to be present at the hunt, and a successful hunt implies a co-ordination of the activities of numerous individuals. Lack of proper co-ordination has to be paid for with life or limb.

[527] The festivals of village-deities, the harvest festival, and the festival of arms all terminate with a dinner for the entire village (or *nāḍ*). The boar that is killed in the collective hunt is cooked on this occasion. If the game is not enough to go round, then one or two domesticated pigs or goats are slaughtered in addition. Each house brings its own cooked rice-flour to the dinner. The headman selects five men to serve food to the men.

The men bring halves of coconut shells or leaf-cups for liquor: a young man is given only one cup of liquor while an elder is entitled to more. The singers get an extra share of meat and liquor. The Poleyas do not sit with the rest, but are given a quantity of meat and liquor which they consume by themselves.

[624] Both the village dance and the village hunt stress the unity of the village. In the case of the village hunt, there is the additional element of the threat of danger from the boar or tiger or other wild animal. The village dinner is rightly called *ūrormé* or 'village harmony', as it maintains and increases the harmony of the village.

IX

634 628 Like the village and *okka*, the *nāḍ* is a real social unit and not a mere administrative division imposed from above by the Rājas. In fact, before the political integration of Coorg by the Rājas, the maximum political unit seems to have been a union of two or three